



The Ginseng Maiden

The Ginseng Maiden

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1. Once upon a time, on the slopes of Phoenix Mountain, there grew many ginseng plants. Now commonly known as a medicinal herb, their healing powers were not originally recognized. Here is a mythical story about how they came to acquire these powers.

2. There once grew a great big ginseng plant on Phoenix Mountain which grew bigger and bigger until one day, after hundreds of years, it suddenly turned into a young maiden.





3. Since this maiden was transformed from ginseng, she naturally had neither father nor mother. She lived in the mountains and kept as her good friends sheep, rabbit, pheasant, squirrel, deer and peacock. They all called her "the Ginseng Maiden."



4. The Ginseng Maiden was very kind-hearted and always thought of her friends. One day when the peacock fell ill, she collected herbs, and fed her water and food at her bedside. The peacock recovered very quickly.



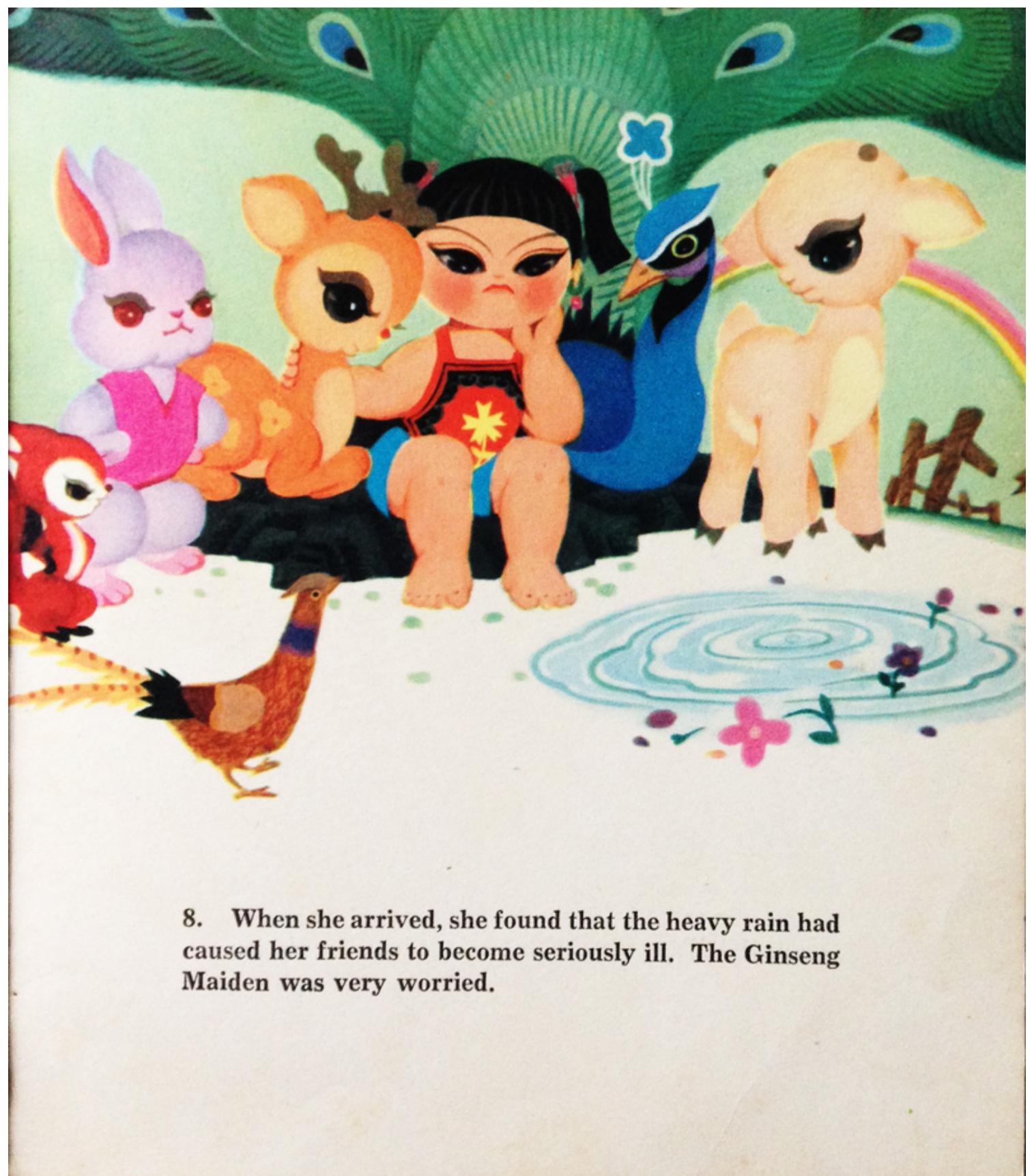
5. The Ginseng Maiden and her friends loved to work. They built houses and fences, gathered firewood, planted vegetables and collected fruit. In their spare time, they sang and danced. They lived a happy life.

6. One day, her friends went down the mountain to work while the Ginseng Maiden and the peacock stayed home to dry slices of pear. Suddenly, it began to rain.

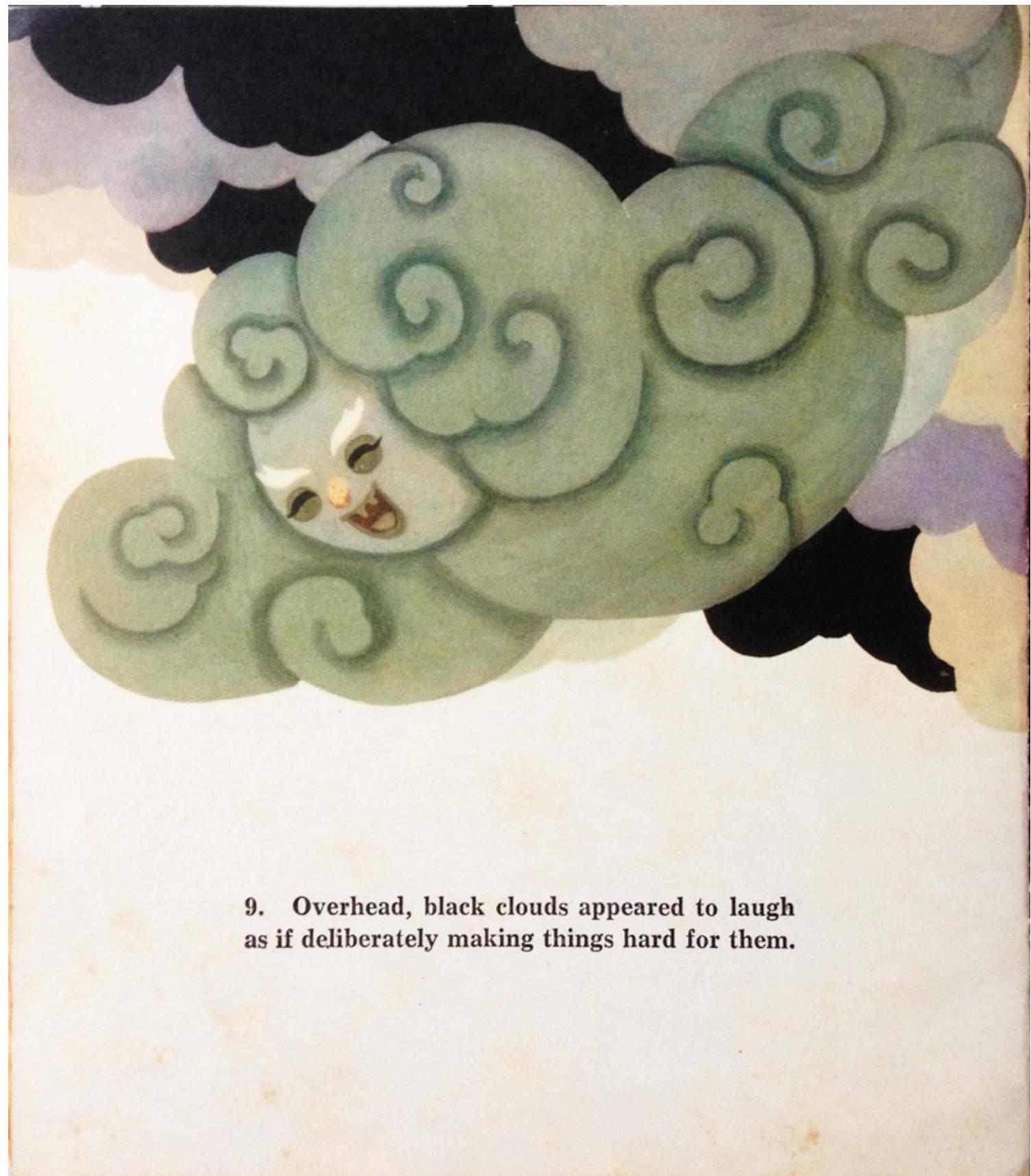


7. She hurried outside to collect the pear slices and then went to the foot of the mountain to send her friends an umbrella.





8. When she arrived, she found that the heavy rain had caused her friends to become seriously ill. The Ginseng Maiden was very worried.



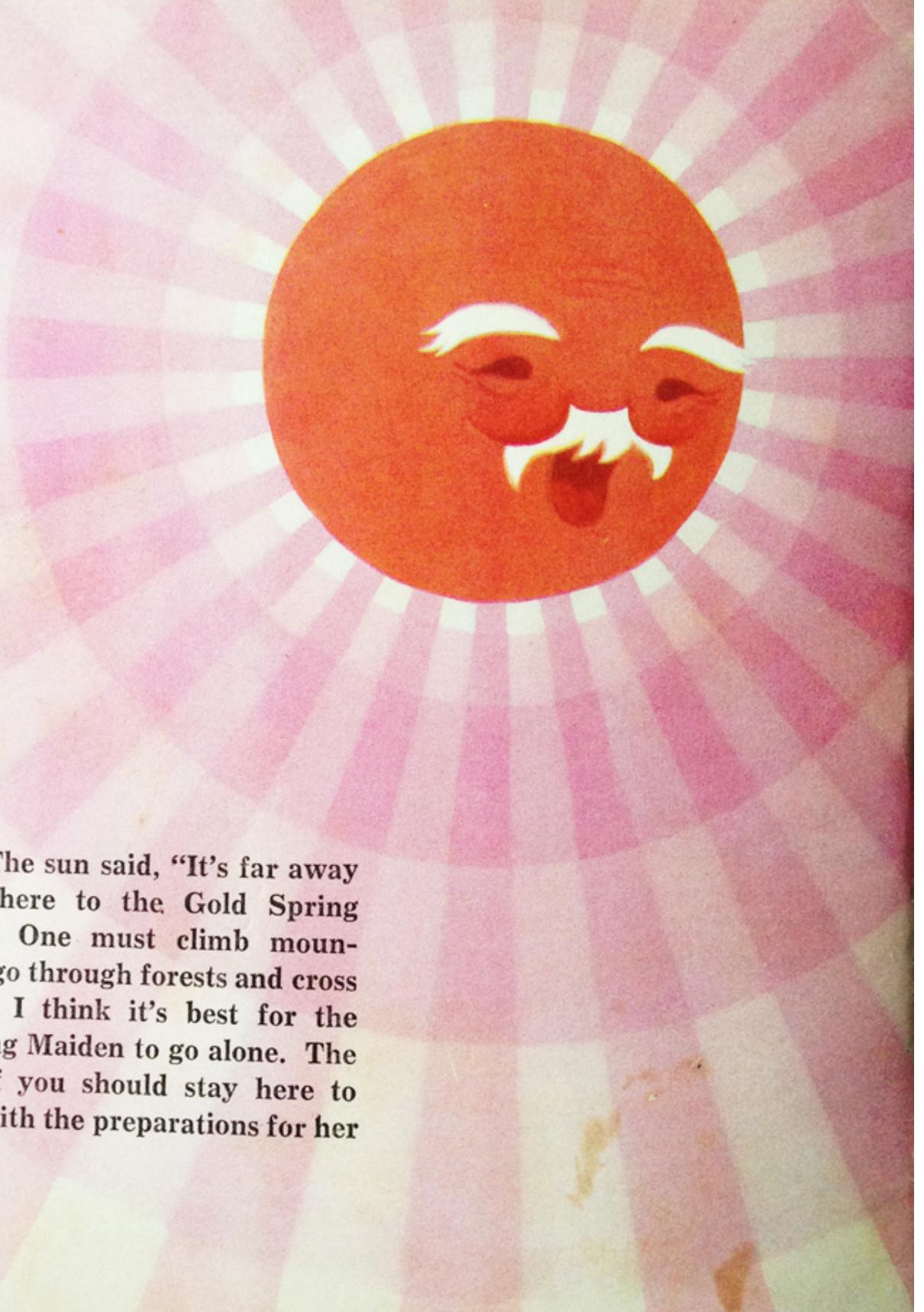
9. Overhead, black clouds appeared to laugh
as if deliberately making things hard for them.



10. Then appeared the sun who said amiably, "Don't you worry, my children. There is an Eighty-Year-Old Immortal Sage who lives on the other side of the Gold Spring River. He knows medicine and will surely be able to help you."



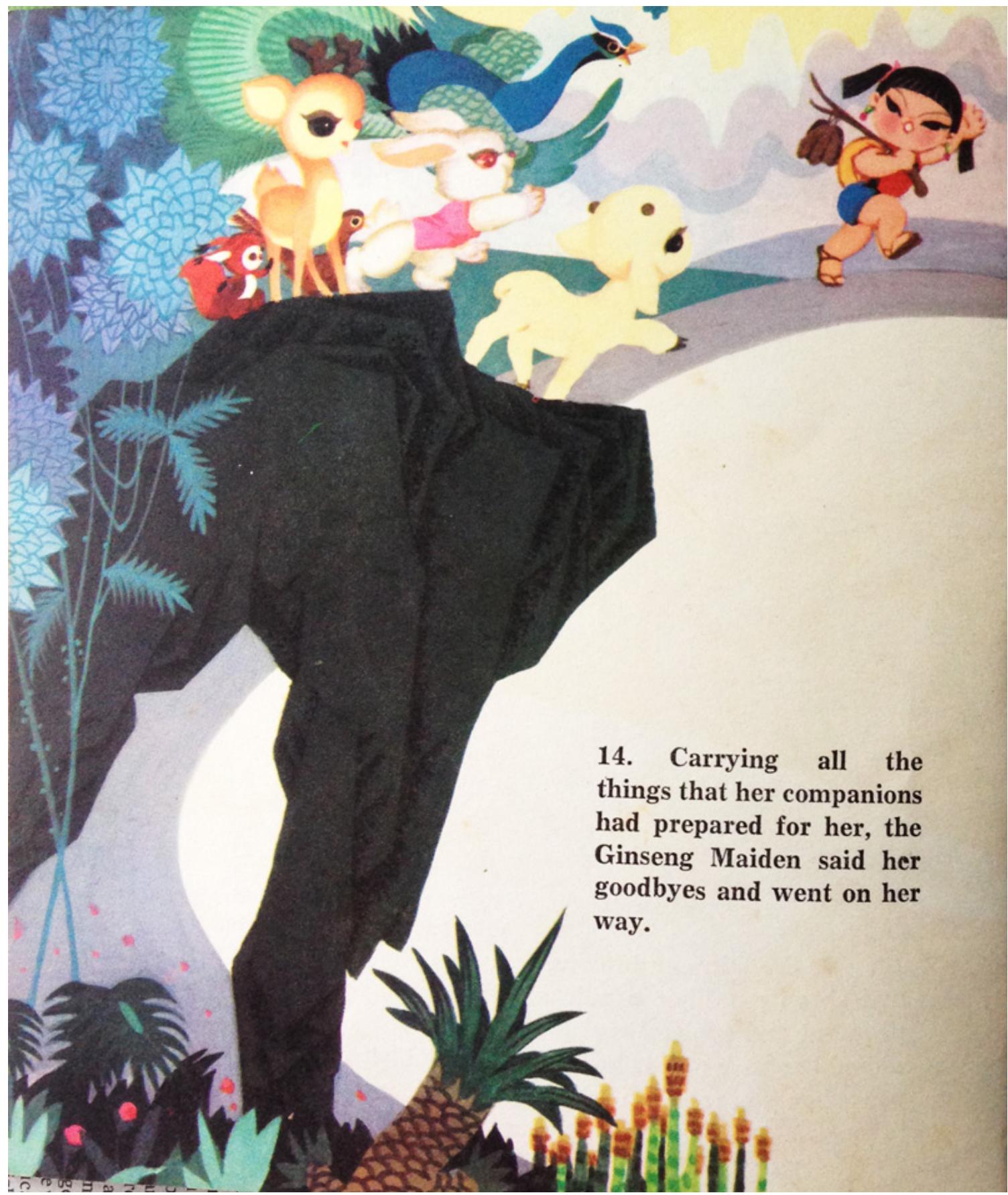
11. Having heard this, the Ginseng Maiden and her friends were very pleased. She said, "I will go see the Eighty-Year-Old Sage and learn from him the cure to your illness." All her friends vied with each other to accompany her.



12. The sun said, "It's far away from here to the Gold Spring River. One must climb mountains, go through forests and cross rivers. I think it's best for the Ginseng Maiden to go alone. The rest of you should stay here to help with the preparations for her trip."



13. As the Ginseng Maiden was about to leave, the little rabbit and sheep gave her a pair of strawshoes they knit themselves; pheasant and squirrel sent her a basket of food; and the deer presented her with a deer horn, saying, "Take it with you. It will help you when you meet up with danger." Then the peacock told her, "I'm sure I will have an opportunity to help you in the future."



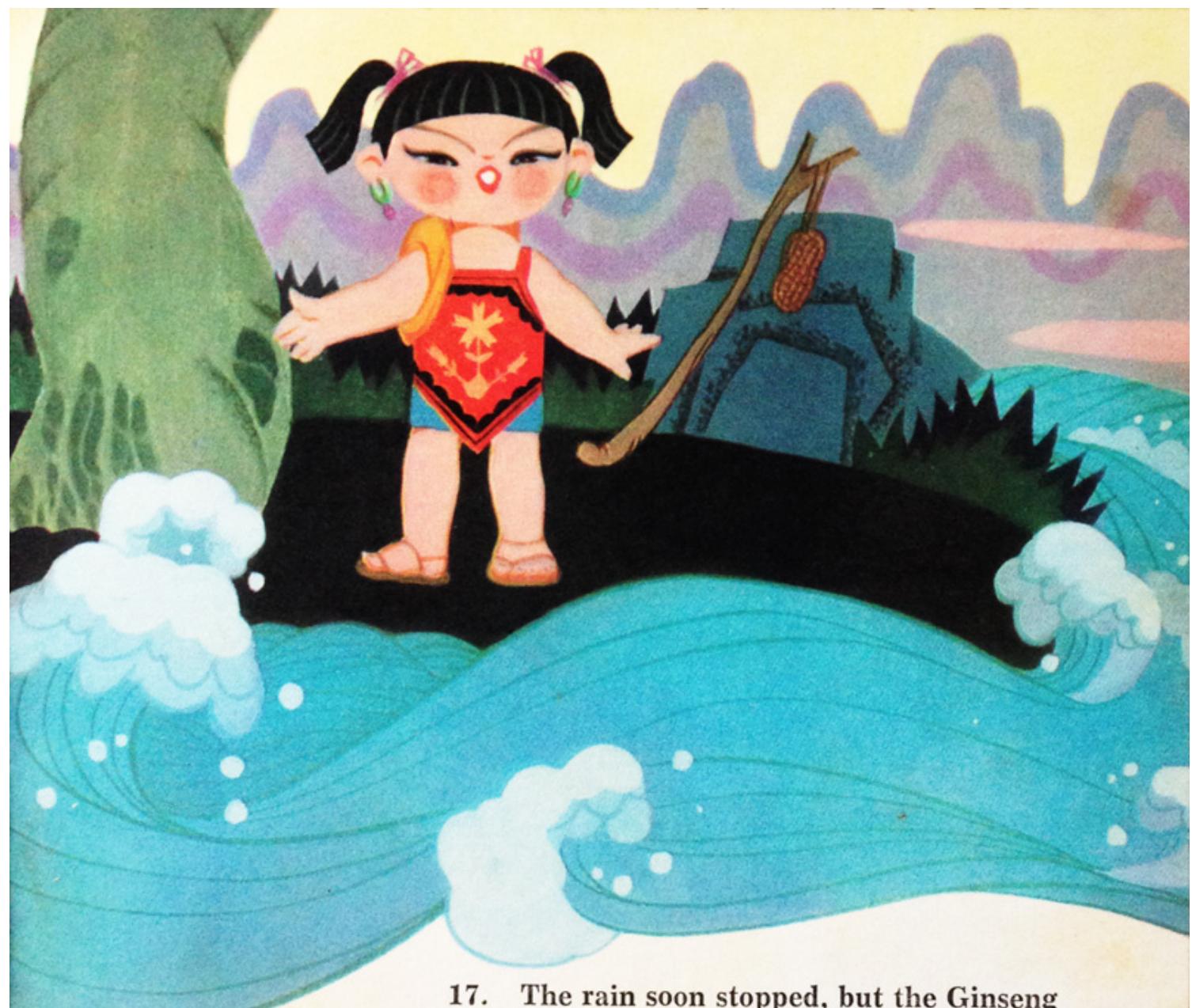
14. Carrying all the things that her companions had prepared for her, the Ginseng Maiden said her goodbyes and went on her way.



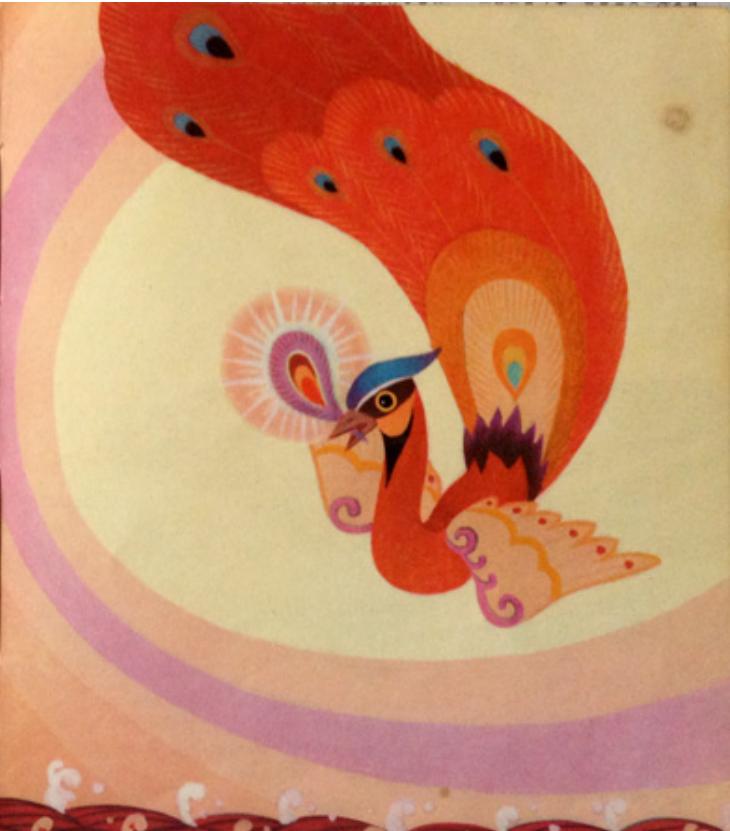
15. She walked on and on for several days until finally she came upon a big rock on a mountain slope. She stopped there to rest.

16. Suddenly, the sky became very overcast, and it began to rain. In no time, the torrents were so heavy that the ground was flooded everywhere.

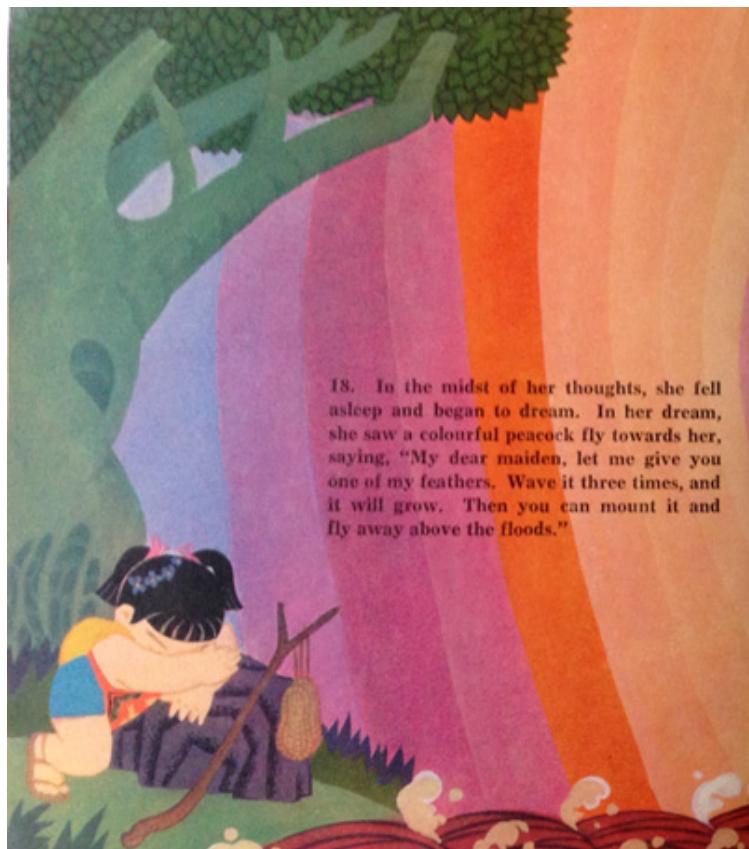




17. The rain soon stopped, but the Ginseng Maiden was stranded on the slope. While waiting, she vowed to herself, "No matter how difficult it is, I must find the sage." Then she cried out, "Flood, flood, please dry up quickly!"

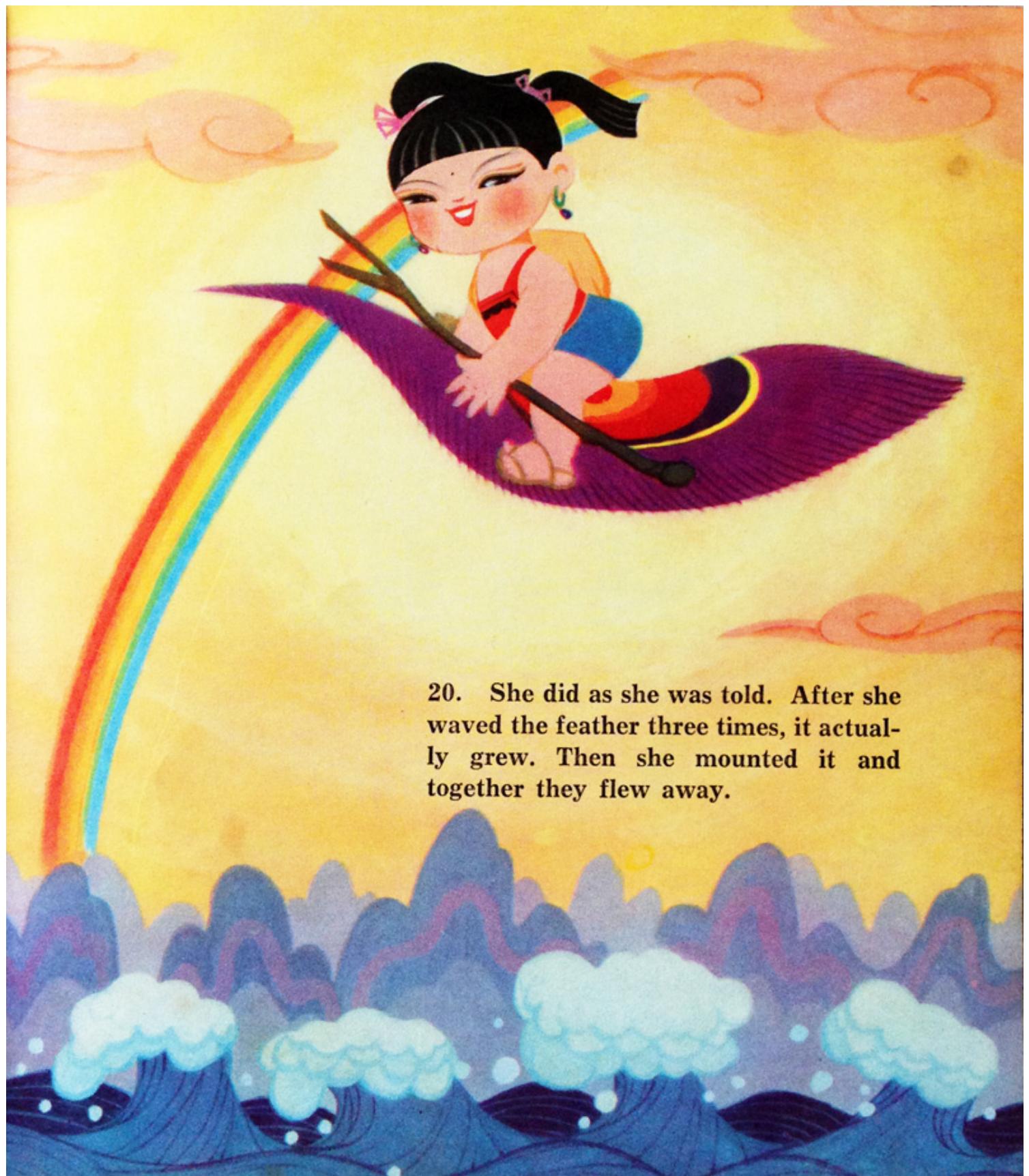


18. In the midst of her thoughts, she fell asleep and began to dream. In her dream, she saw a colourful peacock fly towards her, saying, "My dear maiden, let me give you one of my feathers. Wave it three times, and it will grow. Then you can mount it and fly away above the floods."





19. As soon as the peacock finished her words, she flew away. The Ginseng Maiden woke with a start. When she opened her eyes, she found a splendid feather right before her.



20. She did as she was told. After she waved the feather three times, it actually grew. Then she mounted it and together they flew away.



21. They flew on and on, over mountains and rivers, until they landed in a meadow. Then the feather quickly disappeared. The meadow was very beautiful, and had many kinds of trees, flowers and birds, just like a fairy land.

22. After passing through the meadows, the Ginseng Maiden approached a forest. As she entered it, she heard swallows crying, "Help! Help!" She looked up and found a snake coiled around the tree where a swallow nest was.





23. Suddenly the snake opened its mouth and rushed towards the Ginseng Maiden as if it were going to swallow her up.

24. Oh no! the Ginseng Maiden thought to herself. Then she was reminded of the little deer's words: The horn can protect you if you should meet up with danger! So she took out the horn, and it glittered so brightly that the snake could hardly open its eyes. Then the Ginseng Maiden threw it at the snake which immediately made its escape.

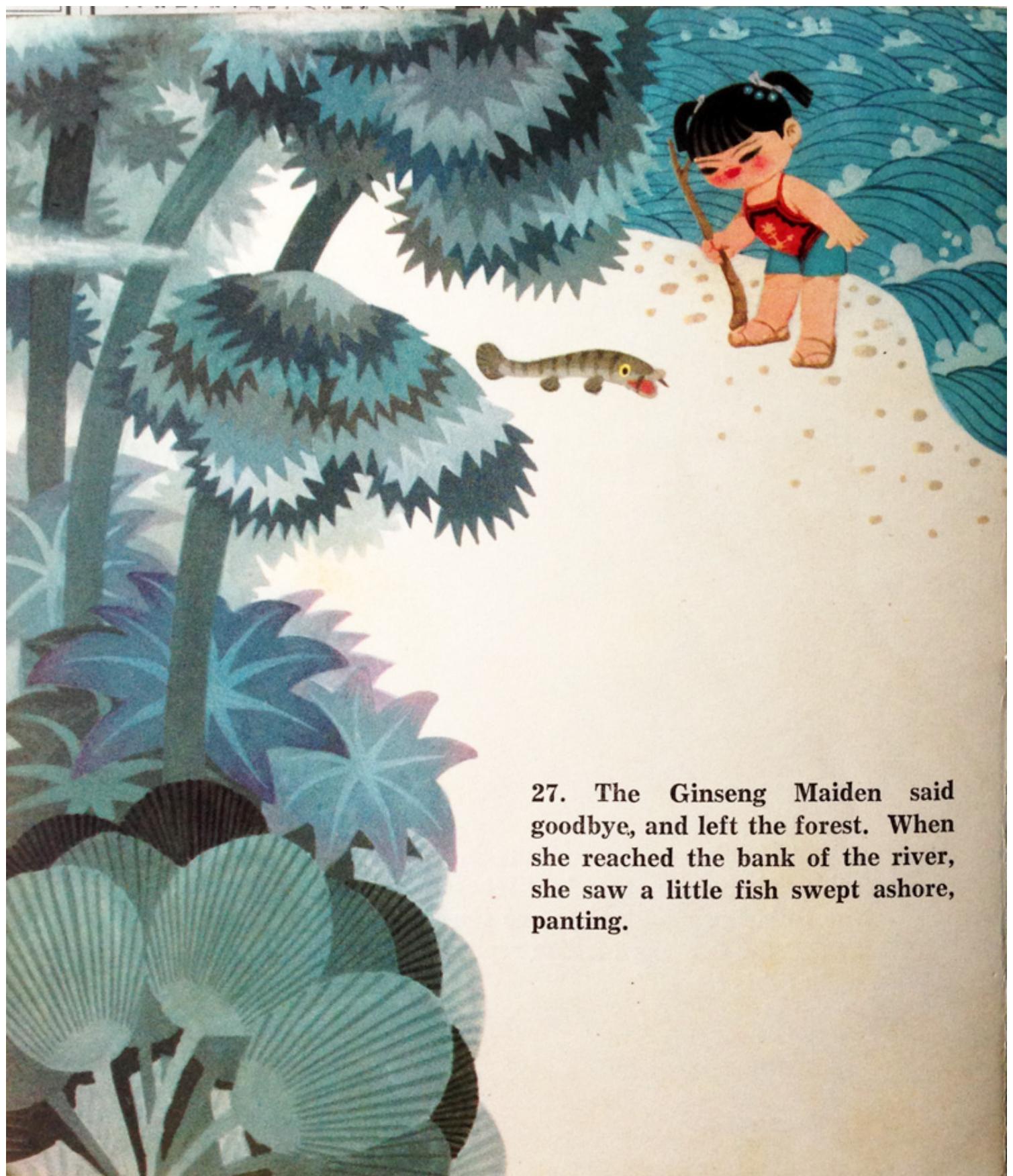




25. The little swallows flew out of their nest and said, "Thank you, dear maiden!" Just then, the mother swallow returned and learned what had happened.

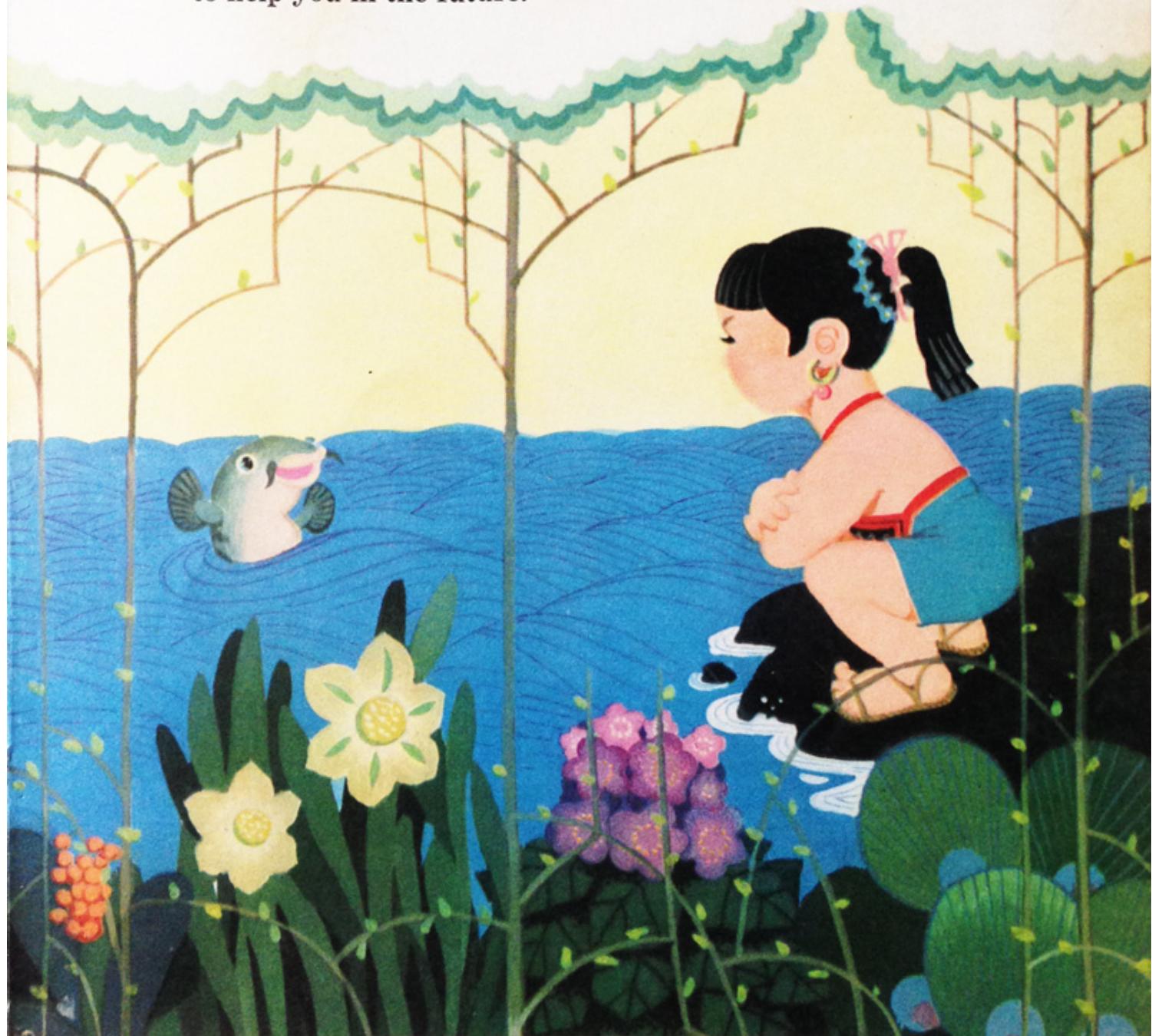


26. "Thank you ever so much, dear maiden!" the mother said. Then she asked, "Where are you going?" "To the Gold Spring River to see the Eighty-Year-Old Immortal Sage," the Ginseng Maiden replied. "The river is just at the end of this forest."



27. The Ginseng Maiden said goodbye, and left the forest. When she reached the bank of the river, she saw a little fish swept ashore, panting.

28. The Ginseng Maiden carried the fish carefully back into the river. Flapping its tail the little fish said, "Thank you, my dear maiden! I am sure I will have an opportunity to help you in the future."





29. The Ginseng Maiden attempted to cross the river but she could not, for the water was deep and the waves turbulent. Just then, two swallows arrived carrying two large lotus leaves in their beaks. They cried, "Dear maiden, these lotus leaves can be used as a boat."

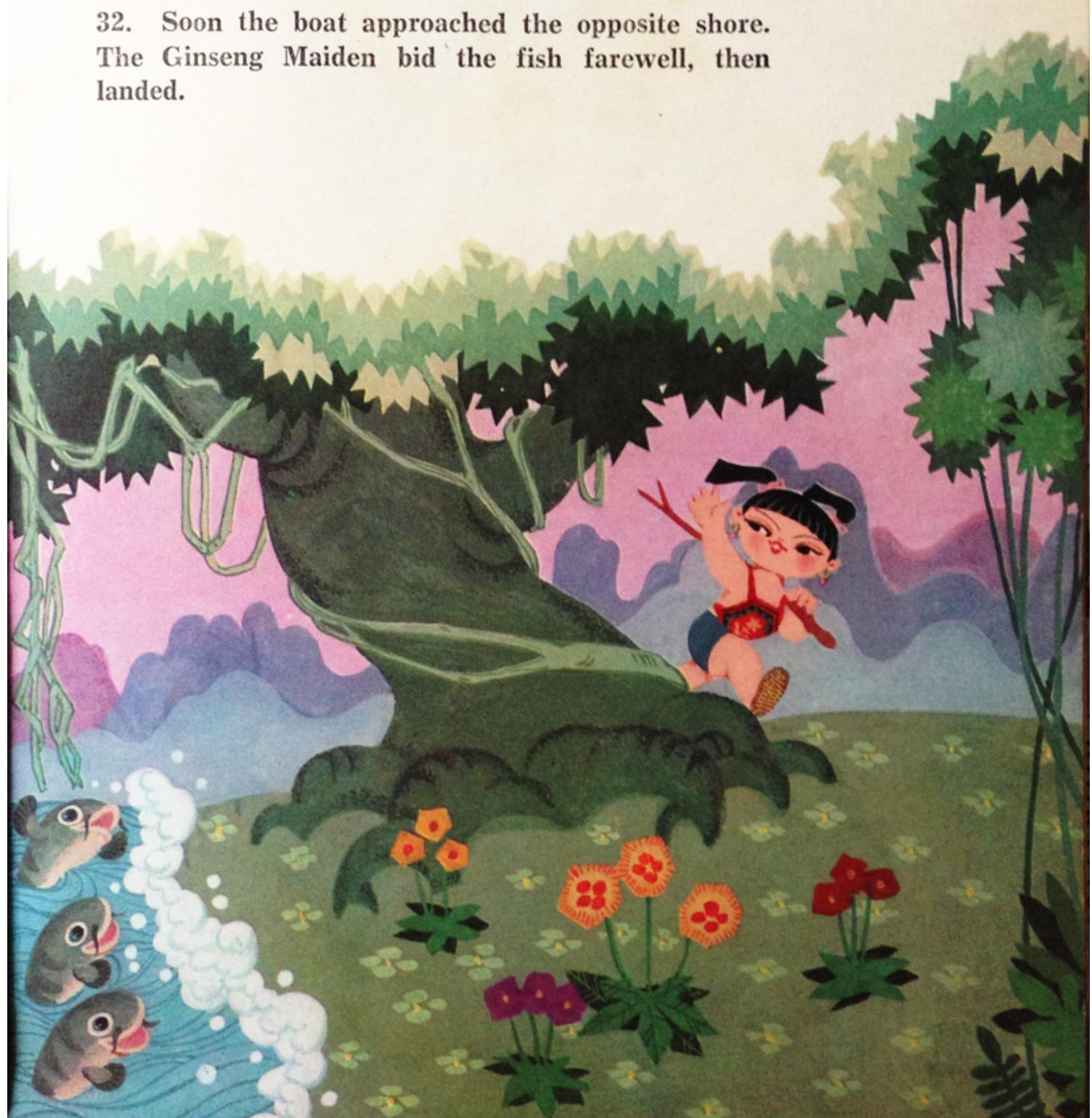
30. The Ginseng Maiden thanked the swallows for their help, then put one leaf on her head and the other in the river. The lotus leaves grew larger and larger until they were as large as a boat. She climbed in.





31. Though the water flowed fast, the lotus leaf boat sailed forward steadily, for the little fish and its companions were protecting it.

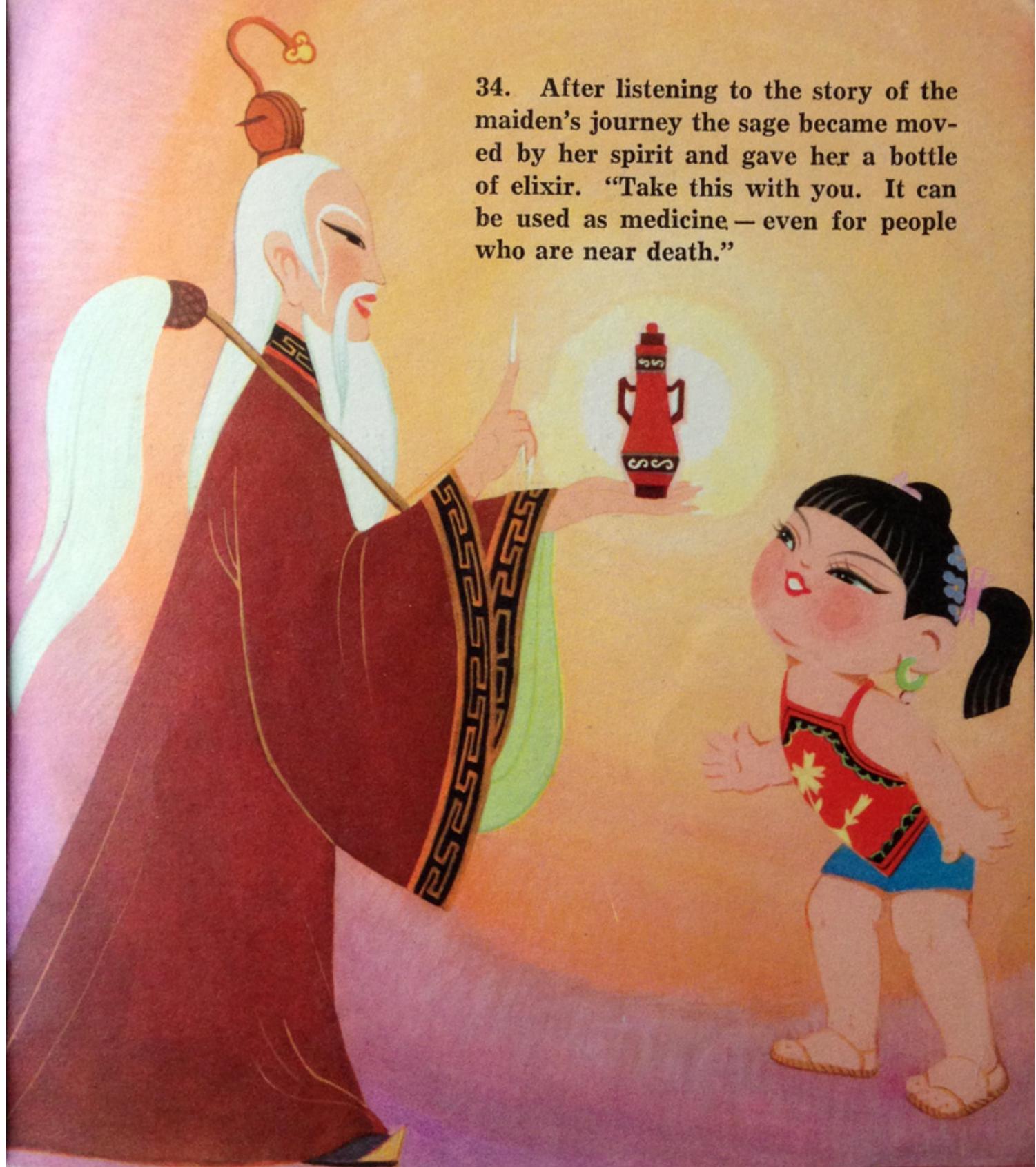
32. Soon the boat approached the opposite shore.
The Ginseng Maiden bid the fish farewell, then
landed.

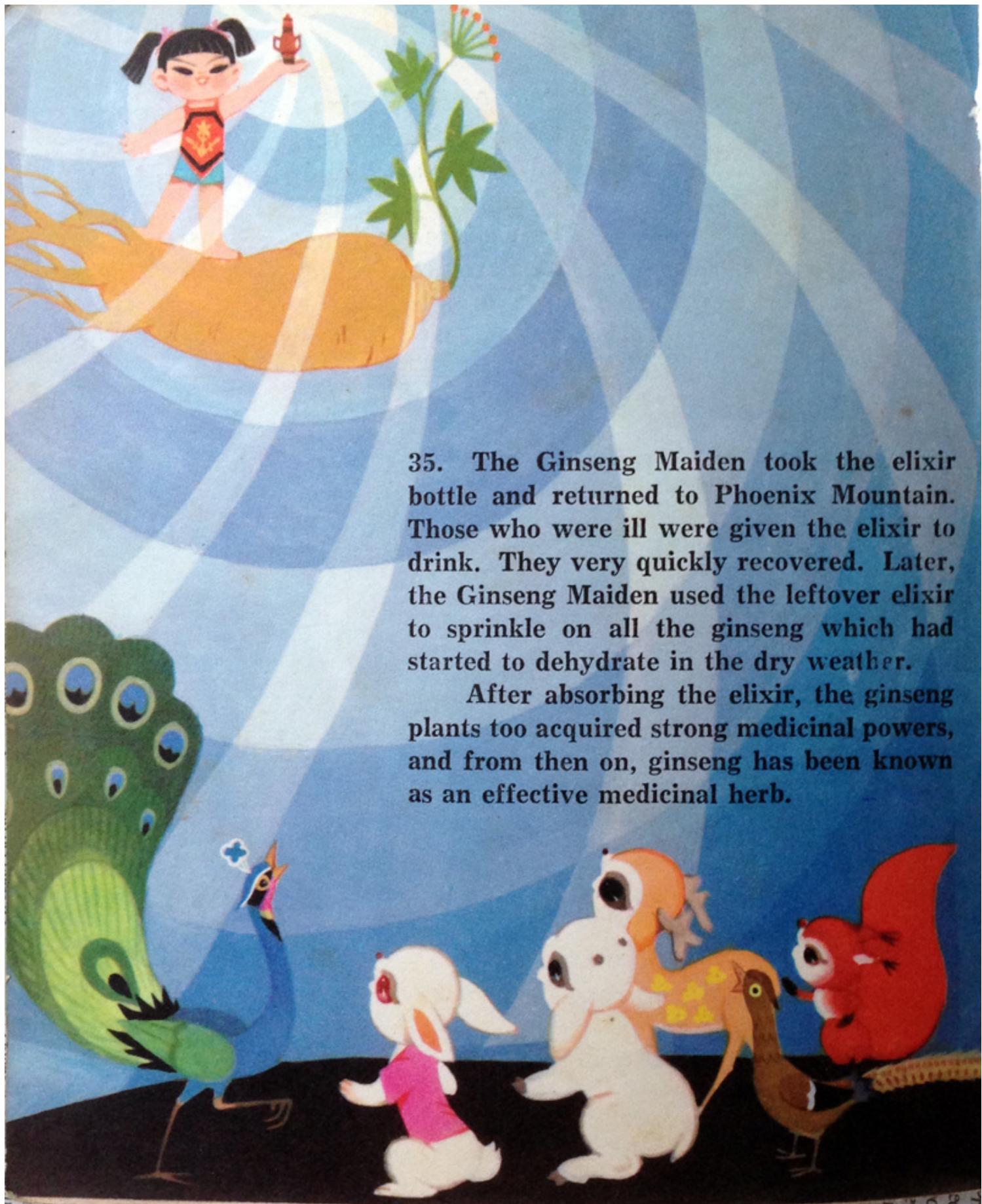




33. When she climbed out of the boat, she saw an old man with a long white beard standing before her. The Ginseng Maiden guessed that the man must certainly be the Eighty-Year-Old Immortal Sage. "Welcome, dear maiden!" said the old man.

34. After listening to the story of the maiden's journey the sage became moved by her spirit and gave her a bottle of elixir. "Take this with you. It can be used as medicine — even for people who are near death."





35. The Ginseng Maiden took the elixir bottle and returned to Phoenix Mountain. Those who were ill were given the elixir to drink. They very quickly recovered. Later, the Ginseng Maiden used the leftover elixir to sprinkle on all the ginseng which had started to dehydrate in the dry weather.

After absorbing the elixir, the ginseng plants too acquired strong medicinal powers, and from then on, ginseng has been known as an effective medicinal herb.

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